

NCA

VOC FOR PGM/FN

BACKGROUNDER NO. 5-6182  
MARGARET KENNEDY/NAIROBI

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# KENYA TOURISM

ANNCR:

THE PEACEFUL SUCCESSION OF DANIEL ARAP MOI AS THE NEW PRESIDENT OF KENYA UNDERLINES THE STABLE POLITICAL IMAGE KENYA PROJECTS TO THE WORLD. THIS PUBLIC IMAGE IS ESPECIALLY IMPORTANT WHEN IT COMES TO TOURISM, WHICH, AFTER AGRICULTURE, IS THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST SOURCE OF FOREIGN EXCHANGE. KENYA CONTINUES TO ENJOY STEADY GROWTH IN TOURISM, BUT AS WE HEAR IN THIS REPORT FROM VOA'S MARGARET KENNEDY IN NAIROBI, THAT SUCCESS HAS NOT BEEN WITHOUT ITS PROBLEMS.

VOICE:

KENYAN TOURIST AGENTS GREETING FOREIGN VISITORS AT NAIROBI'S IMPRESSIVE NEW AIRPORT ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT THAT KENYA IS NOT BOTHERED BY POLITICAL TURMOIL. KENYANS PROUDLY SAY THEIR COUNTRY IS A CAREFREE PLACE FOR A SEASIDE HOLIDAY IN MALINDI OR A SAFARI TO THE GAME PARKS. KENYA IS LOOKING FORWARD TO MAKING ONE HUNDRED TWENTY FIVE MILLION DOLLARS IN FOREIGN EXCHANGE THIS YEAR FROM ITS TOURISM INDUSTRY. ABOUT FOUR HUNDRED FIFTY THOUSAND VISITORS ARE EXPECTED, MOST OF THEM FROM EUROPE AND NORTH AMERICA. IN THE FIRST HALF OF THIS YEAR THE RATE OF TOURISM WAS UP SIX PERCENT OVER LAST YEAR. HOWEVER KENYA HAS EXPERIENCED SOME SETBACKS AS WELL AS GAINS.

EVEN WHILE MORE AND MORE EUROPEANS ARE GOING TO RESORT HOTELS IN MOMBASA AND MALINDI THERE HAS BEEN A STEADY DECLINE IN THE NUMBER OF AMERICAN TOURISTS. AMERICAN TOURISTS HAVE DROPPED MORE THAN TWENTY PERCENT IN TWO YEARS. OBSERVERS BLAME THE PHENOMENON ON WHAT THEY CALL AMERICANS' BAD SENSE OF

GEOGRAPHY -- THAT IS, AMERICANS MAY READ ABOUT FIGHTING IN RHODESIA OR ETHIOPIA AND ASSUME THAT AFRICA IN GENERAL IS NOT A GOOD PLACE TO VACATION.

ANOTHER REASON CITED FOR THE SLACK AMERICAN TRADE IS THE END TO WILD GAME HUNTING MORE THAN A YEAR AGO. AMERICANS SEEMED TO FAVOR THE HUNTING SAFARIS MORE THAN THE EUROPEANS. BUT KENYA'S PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR TOURISM AND WILDLIFE, YUDA KAMORA, SAYS THE EXPENSIVE AIR FARES TO NAIROBI FROM NORTH AMERICA CONSTITUTE THE MOST SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR TOURISM IN KENYA.

MISTER KAMORA NOTES THAT UNDER THE PRESENT FARE STRUCTURES AMERICANS CAN ENJOY TWO OR THREE HOLIDAY TRIPS IN EUROPE FOR WHAT IT COSTS TO FLY ONCE TO AFRICA. HE SAYS INTERNATIONAL AIR CARRIERS ARE CHARGING MARKEDLY HIGHER PRICES TO AFRICA TO MAKE UP LOSSES ON OTHER ROUTES. MISTER KAMORA SAYS KENYA IS NEGOTIATING WITH AMERICAN AUTHORITIES AND PAN AMERICAN AIRWAYS TO BRING THE FARE BETWEEN NEW YORK AND NAIROBI DOWN TO SIX HUNDRED FIFTY DOLLARS ROUND TRIP -- HALF THE PRESENT TOURIST FARE.

YET ANOTHER PROBLEM FOR KENYA TOURISM HAS BEEN TANZANIA'S CLOSING LAST YEAR OF ITS COMMON BORDER WITH KENYA. THIS HAS CUT OFF THE FLOW OF TOURISTS BACK AND FORTH BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES THAT CROSS THE SAME SERENGETTI PLAIN. KENYAN OFFICIALS SAY THAT THIS DIFFICULTY NOW APPEARS TO BE TURNING INSTEAD INTO AN ASSET. THEY POINT TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF MORE UP-COUNTRY TOURIST LODGES IN KENYA TO KEEP VISITORS ENTERTAINED. AND THE OFFICIALS SAY THAT THOSE TOURISTS WHO DO COME TO KENYA STAY LONGER AND SPEND MORE MONEY.

WJL/RCS